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SUBJECT: WAITING FOR ALGERIA: MALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER
DISCUSSES UNREST IN THE NORTH, COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACY
MINISTERIAL

REF: BAMAKO 1015

Classified By: POLITICAL OFFICER GLENN FEDZER FOR REASON 1.4 (B)

¶1. (S) Foreign Minister Moctar Ouane asked to see the Ambassador on September 18 to discuss the situation in northern Mali, and to underline Mali's appreciation for U.S. diplomatic and material support, particularly the recent airlift of food supplies to its besieged garrison at Tinzawaten. The FM also briefed the Ambassador on his September 6-7 trip to ask Algeria for help to end hostilities in the Kidal region. Ouane said that he met with the Algerian Prime Minister to seek renewed engagement by Algiers with the Tuareg dissidents. He also sought Algerian intervention to release the Malian civilian and military hostages taken by Ibrahim ag Bahanga, and for assistance in bringing relief supplies to Tinzawaten.

¶2. (S) Echoing President Amadou Toumani Toure's earlier comments to the Ambassador (reftel), Ouane expressed frustration at the absence of action from Algeria, including what the Malians regard as a token resupply effort that also provided aid and comfort to Bahanga and the forces he has deployed around Tinzawaten. Ouane said that Alliance for Democratic Change (ADC) leader Iyad ag Ghali's involvement in brokering a ceasefire in advance of negotiations had not been successful, and that Algerian mediation would be essential to resolve the current crisis. He added that Mali found it inexplicable that Algeria -- the architect of the agreement that ended the May 2006 Tuareg rebellion -- was standing on the sidelines when Bahanga's actions also affected their own security.

¶3. (S) Ouane reiterated the Malian Government's deep appreciation for the U.S. airlift, saying it sent a "powerful signal" that all sides were committed to a peaceful resolution of the crisis. Noting that Bahanga had demanded the Malians evacuate Tinzawaten, FM Ouane said that Mali could not agree to the complete withdrawal of troops from its own territory. He added that it was a mistake to have agreed to demilitarize the north as part of the National Pact that ended the Tuareg uprising in the 90s. The subsequent absence of security forces allowed illegality to flourish, and only by reestablishing itself in the north could the Malian state put an end to it. Ouane said he had seen the Algerian Ambassador to Mali on September 17, but averred that the Algerian appeared to have no instructions from Algiers. (Note: Algerian Ambassador to Mali Abdelkrim Gheraieb was a key participant in the negotiations that led to the National Pact in the 1990s, and he played an equally influential role in brokering the 2006 Algiers Accords. End Note).

4.(U) Turning to other topics, Minister Ouane reiterated a request for U.S. financial and material assistance with the

Community of Democracy Ministerial scheduled for Bamako November 15-17. In response to a query from the Ambassador, the FM said that Mali had reached out to other partners such as Spain and Italy, but had heard nothing back. The Ambassador encouraged the FM to engage key partners like France, and noted that the United States was supporting the Malian effort with appeals to other members of the Community of Democracies. Ouane said he planned to raise Mali's appeal at the democracy caucus ministerial set for the October 1 on the margins of UNGA.

McCulley